

# THE SCYLLA OF CORVEY AND HER ANCESTORS

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*namque tu solebas  
meas esse aliquid putare nugas*

Dear Ernst,

Ever since the time we met at the corner of the Fogg at Quincy Street and Broadway when you were Wilhelm Köhler's assistant at Harvard you have been an unfailing inspiration and a font of knowledge. You led and I seconded in the duet on Hellenistic and Byzantine art that we sang at Dumbarton Oaks in 1962, and we both joined the sextet conducted by Kurt Weitzmann at the Metropolitan Museum's "Age of Spirituality" symposium in 1977.

The present article is a bit of what the Germans call *Retourkutsche*; for you yourself have provided me with the references to the paintings in the Westwork of Corvey and put me in touch with Hilde Claussen who is publishing them.<sup>1</sup>

In this illustrious company of medievalists, I shall not attempt any discussion of the style of these remarkable paintings; that, in any case, requires the discussion of the other wall paintings of the Westwork. Completed around A.D. 850, the paintings, it seems to me, reflect simplification and refraction of Classical drawings or cartoons of a tradition that emphasized linear outlines.<sup>2</sup> In her

fine preliminary publication Claussen has described the group: Odysseus with lance on the left, the Scylla, girt by dogs and with a mighty fishtail, on the right. She holds a companion of Odysseus under her left arm.

To find Classical subjects on the walls of the famous abbey, where the only surviving medieval manuscript of Tacitus' *Annales* I–V was kept for centuries, is no surprise to medievalists.<sup>3</sup> The monks may have been acquainted with the discussion of Scylla by Bishop Isidore of Seville (A.D. 602–636). In his *Etymologiae* Isidore is pretty factual: "Some say that Scylla is a woman girt with heads of dogs barking loudly; they say this because at the Sicilian Straits the sailors, scared by the eddies of clashing currents of waves, believe they are caused by a chasm opening in the watery depth" (XI.3.32). Later (*Etym.* XIII.18.3–4), following Sallust, he adds that "the Straits of Sicily are three miles wide" and "are infamous because of monsters Scylla and Charybdis, who are shown here. The inhabitants call a cliff hanging over the sea Scylla because from afar the rock seems to resemble the form of Scylla."<sup>4</sup> Written before the

<sup>1</sup>Scylla of Corvey: Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, *Kunst und Kultur im Weserraum 800–1600 Corvey* 28.5–15.9.1966, I (Münster, 1967), color pl. A, opp. 16; H. Claussen in II, 646–48, no. 381. Among other paintings two dolphins belong to the Scylla group.

<sup>2</sup>K. Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), 32, fig. 37, a papyrus fragment illuminating the *Iliad*—4th century?

I am greatly obliged to H. Claussen for the two illustrations of the Corvey Scylla and for the generous permission to publish them. Susan Woodford did early collecting of material. H.

Bloch read the draft. For help with Near Eastern material I owe a special debt to H. G. Güterbock. J. Bloom, J. Boardman, R. F. Martin, J. R. Mertens, G. Nagy, I. Pini, E. Porada, M. Price, M. True, and F. Wolski helped in various ways.

<sup>3</sup>R. J. Tarrant in L. D. Reynolds, ed., *Texts and Transmission. A Survey of the Latin Classics* (Oxford, 1983), 406 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Isidorus, *Etymologiae*, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford, 1911). As H. Bloch has kindly pointed out, in the last passage, Isidore is following Sallust, C. Sallusti Crispi, *Historiarum reliquiae*, II, ed. B. Maurenbrecher (Leipzig, 1893), no. F 27. The basic treatment of the two Scyllas, the Homeric monster (*Odyssey*) (I), and the love-smitten daughter of Minos (II), is by O. Waser in Roscher, IV, 1023 (I); 1064–71 (II). A clear and sensible update

time that the Corvey Scylla was painted, the *Libri Carolini* (A.D. 792–793) know but reject as reprehensible the portrayal of “Scylla, girt with dogs’ heads.”<sup>5</sup>

There are some echoes of Virgil as well as Sallust in Isidore’s brief entries. The poet of the messianic Fourth Eclogue had, indeed, helped the memory of Scylla to survive into the Carolingian age. After the descent to Orcus (the Nether World) with the Sibyl, Aeneas beholds “Scyllaeque bifformes,” “the two-bodied Scyllas” (*Aeneid* VI.289). The scene is illustrated in the famous Vaticanus latinus 3225, pictura 33: “The Scylla is represented in profile. Her body ends in (apparently only one) fish-tail. She does not swing the rudder like a weapon, as in other representations of this episode, but holds it quietly over her shoulder, as on a contorniate in Vienna and some African mosaics.”<sup>6</sup>

I take Vaticanus latinus 3225 to be a work of the early fifth century. It attests the existence of a tradition of a one-panel illumination showing Aeneas

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to Waser is K. Shepard, *The Fish-Tailed Monster in Greek and Roman Art* (Menasha, 1940). Important for art: B. Conticello, “I gruppi scultorei di soggetto mitologico a Sperlonga,” and B. Andrae, “Die römischen Repliken der mythologischen Skulpturengruppen von Sperlonga,” *Antike Plastik* 14 (Berlin, 1974) (hereafter *Antike Plastik* 14); K. Tuchelt, “Skylia in einem neugefundenen Tonmodell aus Didyma,” *IstMitt* 17 (1967), 173–93, pl. 17, a comprehensive iconographic survey; Claussen (above, note 1), nos. 383–88; A. Oliver, Jr., *The Reconstruction of Two Apulian Tomb Groups*, *Antike Kunst*, Beiheft 5 (1968), 11–12, pl. 7 (Scylla askoi); H. Lohmann, “Ein Canosiner Volutenkrater im Martin von Wagner Museum,” *AA* 94 (1979), 187–213, a reference I owe to J. Boardman; S. Lattimore, *The Marine Thiasos in Greek Sculpture* (Los Angeles, 1976), 61–63, pl. 30, Scylla by Scopas; L. De Lachenal, “Sul gruppo della Scilla d’Anzio,” *Rend-PontAcc* 49 (1976–77), 93–116, reconstruction of group in the Imperial Villa at Anzio. E. T. Vermeule in *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry*, Sather Classical Lectures 46 (Berkeley, 1979), chap. 6, fig. 8, 187, 196, has given us a beautifully written and thoughtful essay on the destructive power of the sea and monsters, referring to Scyllas *en passant*. See also J. Schmidt, in *RE*, 2nd ed., V, 647–58; E. Paribeni, “Scilla,” in *EAA*, VII, 109–11.

Scylla comes late in the alphabet, hence nothing has appeared in T. Klauser, ed., *RAC*, nor in K. Wessel, ed., *RBK*, nor in the majestically slow *Lexicon international des mythes classiques*, J. R. Gisler, ed., as Susan Woodford has kindly ascertained.

For the Christian interpretation of Scylla as the symbol of evil overcome by *Odysseus Christianus*, see H. Rahner’s inspirational discussion of this subject in his book *Griechische Mythen in christlicher Deutung* (Zurich, 1945), pt. 2, 245–48. I owe to my friend J. Götte the knowledge of this important study.

<sup>5</sup>*Libri Carolini*, MGH, Suppl., *Legum Sectio III, Conc.*, II, Suppl. (Hannover, 1934), 151. A new edition is being prepared by A. Freeman-Mayvaert, who kindly suggested the date of A.D. 792–793.

<sup>6</sup>J. DeWit, *Die Miniaturen des Vergilius Vaticanus* (3225) (Amsterdam, 1959), 107, pictura 33. Virgil has much to say about a ship named Scylla that competed in the sailing races held after the death of Anchises. No illumination of Scylla appears in the *Vergilius Romanus*.

and the Sibyl entering Orcus. The Roman version may well have been adopted from a Hellenistic model of Odysseus’ descent into Hades. Unfortunately the panel that would have contained the Scylla group is lost in the wonderful late Hellenistic (ca. 100–50 B.C.) picture series in a house on the Esquiline in Rome.<sup>7</sup>

In her iconography the Scylla of Corvey is a case of “man bites dog.” In the most popular Hellenistic and Roman pictorial tradition, illustrated by the mosaic from Tor Marancio (Fig. 3) and the contorniates, it is Scylla who swings her lancelike rudder as if to pierce Odysseus.<sup>8</sup> In Corvey Odysseus pierces Scylla (Figs. 1 and 2).

To be sure, Homer had envisaged Odysseus as a warrior armed with two spears and seeking to attack Scylla (*Odyssey* XII.228); but then, in Homer Scylla is not a half-female creature. A monster with six heads and twelve feet, concealed in a cave, snatching dolphins, dogs, and *ketoî* from the sea, Scylla is a Hydralike monster with the voice of a whelp. Her six heads snatch six sailors of Odysseus. As the sailors writhe like fish she devours them (*Odyssey* XII.245–59).

The next step back in time takes us to the beautiful medallions known as contorniates, which were struck in Rome supposedly by the last champions of paganism, the Roman aristocracy. Some show the group with the ship and an armed Odysseus valiantly swinging his lances, as Scylla grips the ship’s rudder with her right hand, her dogs’ heads biting the sailors, her twin fishtails waving high in the air.<sup>9</sup>

Scylla, as we see her in Vaticanus latinus 3225, may have been transposed from a Hellenistic original into a Roman key, from Odysseus to Aeneas, after the *Aeneid* was published (16 B.C.). Already under the early Roman Empire illustrated de luxe manuscript editions of the *Aeneid* with Latin labels had appeared, of which the mosaics (Fig. 3), and Vaticanus latinus 3225, as well as minor arts, provide numerous reflections. For Virgil Scylla was “a fair-bosomed maiden down to the waist, below a sea-dragon of monstrous frame with dolphins’ tails joined to a belly of sea-green hounds” (*Aeneid* III.426–31, 435).

<sup>7</sup>H. P. von Blanckenhagen, “The Odyssey Frieze,” *RM* 70 (1963), 100–146.

<sup>8</sup>J. R. Clarke, *Roman Black-and-White Figural Mosaics* (New York, 1979), 74–77, figs. 76–77. The Villa of Munatia Procula, to which this mosaic belonged, has brick stamps dated A.D. 123.

<sup>9</sup>A. and E. R. Alföldi, *Die Kontorniat Medallions*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1976), 201, pls. 9, 12–13, 25, 63–65, 146–48, 159–61.

The Hellenistic era was for Scylla the time of most diversified meanings in thought and most numerous portrayals in art. In the East a famous bronze group of Scylla stood in the Hippodrome of Constantinople, supposedly as a pendant to a ruler as cruel as Scylla—either Anastasius (A.D. 491–518) or Justin I (A.D. 518–527). This Scylla was represented on the column of Arcadius and therefore was in Constantinople before A.D. 421.<sup>10</sup>

As for sculpture in stone, B. Andreae, in a comprehensive and carefully documented review, makes a plausible case for considering the famous over-life-size marble sculptures found in the cave of Sperlonga as the originals for this widely copied “Small Scylla” series.<sup>11</sup> The “Small Scylla” group was essentially a reduced copy of the “Big Scylla,” just as the “Big Gauls” are the models for the somewhat later “Small Gauls” of Pergamum, say 230–200 B.C. against 150–100 B.C. Unfortunately there is not enough preserved to reconstruct the “Big Scylla” group in its entirety; however, B. Conticello’s reconstruction of one part, a sailor squeezed to death by the pythonlike tail of Scylla, conveys the dynamic, dramatic quality of this grandiose creation of the Hellenistic baroque. As on the contorniates, the unified tightly knit design included the ship.<sup>12</sup>

There has been much argument whether the Scylla of Sperlonga is Hellenistic or early Imperial. With all respect to that brilliant *advocatus diaboli* P. V. von Blanckenhagen who argues a Flavian date,<sup>13</sup> my pilgrimage to Sperlonga left me in no doubt that the Sperlonga groups are Hellenistic originals. I believe that during his self-imposed exile to Rhodes (6 B.C.–A.D. 2), Emperor Tiberius saw these groups and had them brought to his Spelunca (Suetonius, *Tiberius* 39) with Scylla as a centerpiece of the large water pool. As to style, it is well to recall that sculptors from Rhodes worked on the great Hellenistic baroque frieze of Pergamum. Creators of the Laocoon, as well as of the Polyphemos and Scylla groups, Athanadoros, Agasandros, and Polydoros of Rhodes, are emerging as the “proto-Michelangelos” of the Hellenistic world.<sup>14</sup>

Other sculptured groups of Scylla have been

proposed: a “Tritoness” in Ostia is considered by S. Lattimore to be a reflection of a Scylla by Scopas,<sup>15</sup> and L. De Lachenal has attempted a reconstruction of a Scylla group from the Imperial Villa of Anzio.<sup>16</sup>

A stunning Hellenistic Scylla, done in gilded silver relief, appears on the top of a pyxis from southern Italy. The piece was part of a treasure that is attributed by D. von Bothmer to the third century B.C. and Tarentine workmanship.<sup>17</sup>

In literature realistic brutality was implicit in Homer’s account—how the sailors snatched by Scylla were writhing, flinging out their hands and kicking their feet as Scylla devoured them (*Odyssey* XII.255–58). This tradition was preserved by mythographers and embroidered by poets.<sup>18</sup>

Next to the evil (though possibly beautiful) Scylla, there arose in later Hellenism a romantic version of Scylla: a human, lovesick maiden, whose romance with Glaucus parallels that of Acis and Galatea. In the end the jealous Circe turned Scylla into a sea monster. As R. F. Thomas has pointed out, a number of Hellenistic confections and variations of the Scylla theme were surveyed by the author of the Pseudo-Virgilian *Ciris* (lines 54–91): “many great poets, Messala, held that changing her shape, Scylla became a voracious monster infesting a rock. . . .”<sup>19</sup>

In geography Scylla and Triton had become geographic personifications of the Sicilian Straits or, indeed, of the sea in general, already in the Classical age. The Alexandrian poet Apollonius of Rhodes treats the proverbial dangers of Scylla and the adventure with Scylla and Charybdis with a light touch: Thetis and the Nereids play water polo with the good ship Argo; several aerial passes get the ship safely through the Straits (ca. 250 B.C.). Scientists, however, explained the Straits as a result of earthquakes and dismissed Scylla and Charybdis as pure fables.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Lattimore, *Marine Thiasos*, 61–62, pl. xxx, fig. 41, in the tradition of Scopas.

<sup>16</sup> De Lachenal, “Scilla d’Anzio” (above, note 4).

<sup>17</sup> D. von Bothmer, “A Greek and Roman Treasury,” *BMMA* 42:1 (1984), 12, 55, no. 95, frontispiece and text illus. in color.

<sup>18</sup> O. Waser in Roscher, IV, 1026–35.

<sup>19</sup> R. F. Thomas, by letter, citing the detailed commentary and references to Latin poets by R. O. A. M. Lyne, *Ciris* (Cambridge, 1978), 125, 136–37. Already in the mid-4th century B.C. the comic playwright Anaxilas compared a call girl to a Scylla: “Why do you think Nannion is any different from a Scylla? She has already choked two of your companions and is now hunting the third”; T. Kock, ed., *Comicorum Atticorum fragmenta*, II (Leipzig, 1880–89; rpr. Utrecht, 1976), 270, frag. 22, line 15.

<sup>20</sup> Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* IV.920–56. Among the scientists was Eratosthenes of Alexandria.

<sup>10</sup> E. Q. Giglioli, “La colonna d’Arcadio,” *ArchCl* 6 (1954), 100, pls. 23–24.

<sup>11</sup> Andreae, *Antike Plastik* 14, 83–84.

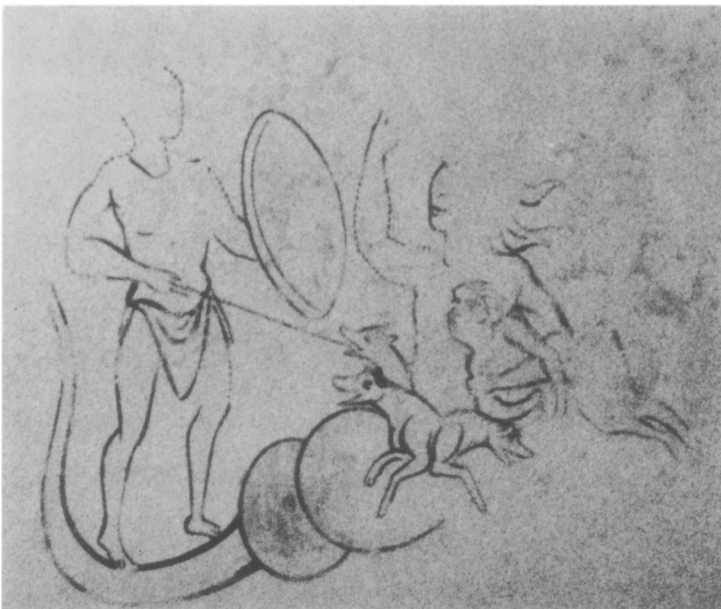
<sup>12</sup> Conticello, *Antike Plastik* 14, fig. 19.

<sup>13</sup> H. P. von Blanckenhagen, “Laocoon, Sperlonga und Vergil,” *AA* 84 (1969), 256–75.

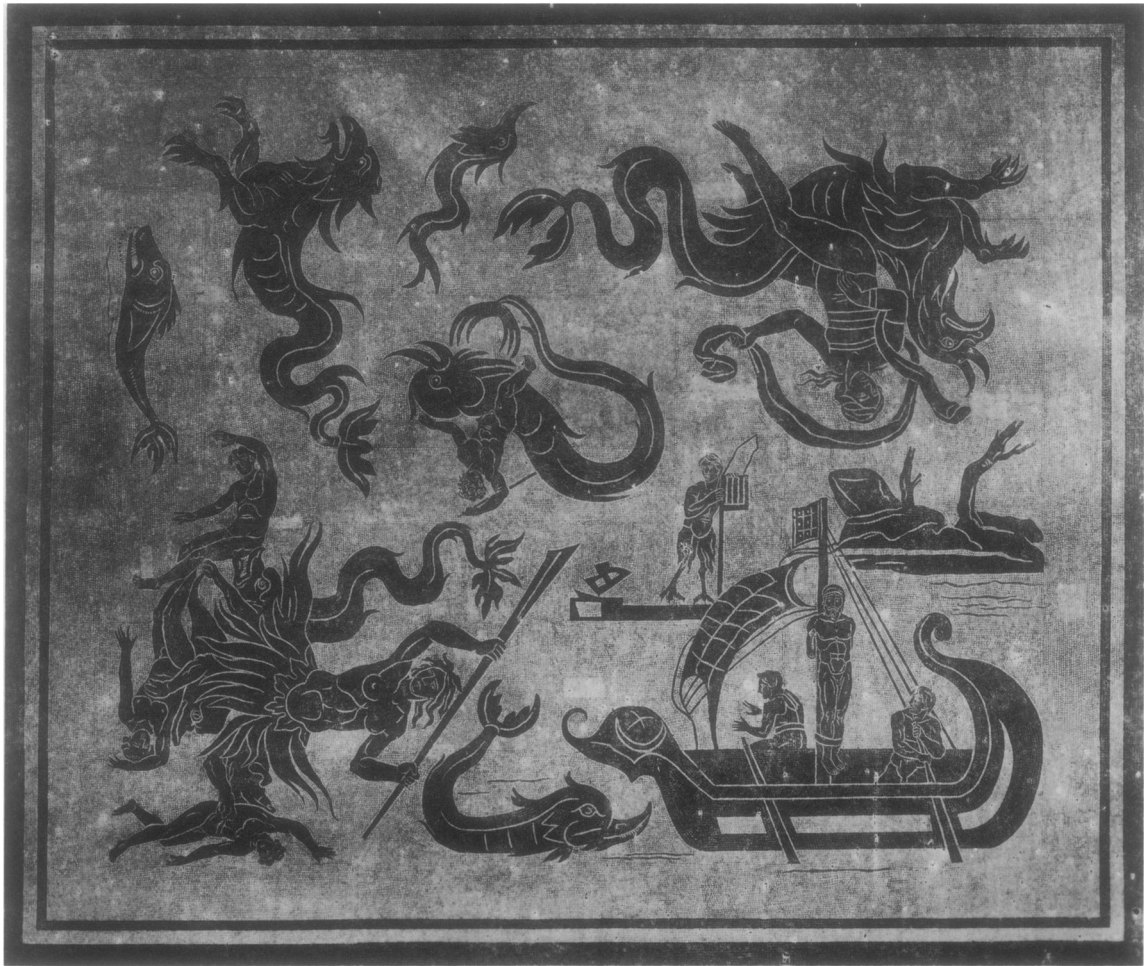
<sup>14</sup> Conticello, *Antike Plastik* 14, 48.



1. The Scylla of Corvey, wall painting, Odysseus and Scylla  
(photo: H. Claussen and Westfälisches Amt für Denkmalpflege, Münster)



2. Explicatory drawing of the Scylla group (photo: H. Claussen and Westfälisches Amt für Denkmalpflege, Münster)



3. Mosaic from Tor Marancio, Scylla group, ca. A.D. 123 (photo: Musei Vaticani)



4. Tetradrachma of Acragas, Scylla and crab, private collection (photo: Hirmer Fotoarchiv)

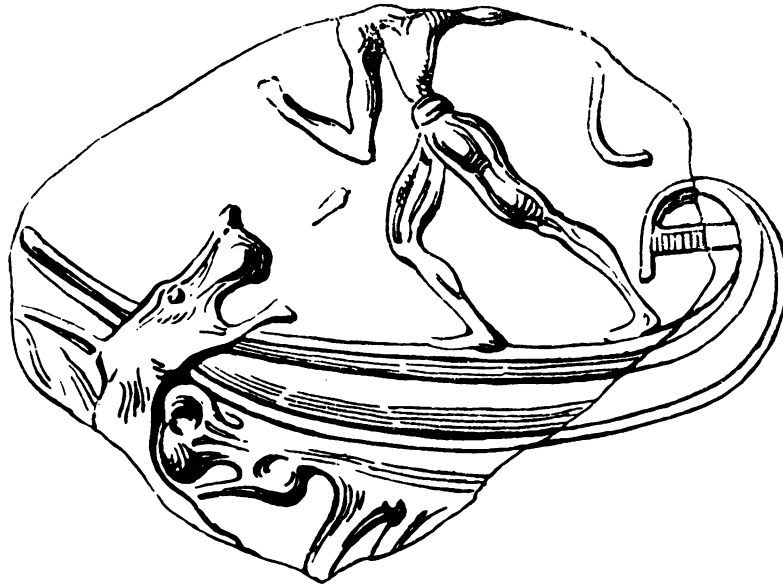


5. Apulian vase fragment, Scylla and Europa on the bull, W. and M. Bareiss Collection  
(photo: J. Paul Getty Museum)

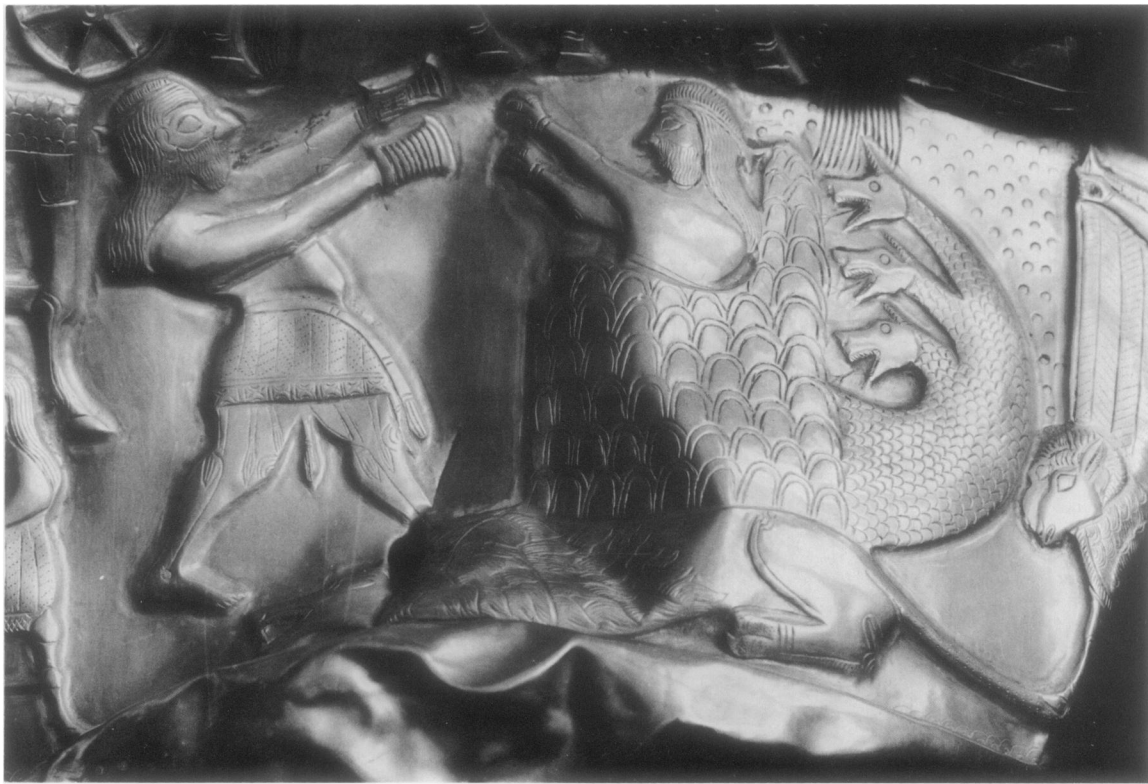




6. Paestan crater by Astreas, Europa on bull, with Scylla (left) and Triton (right) below (photo: J. Paul Getty Museum)



7. Minoan clay sealing from Cnossus, boat with sailor attacked by sea monster, Heraklion Museum (after K. Shepard, *The Fish-Tailed Monster in Greek and Roman Art*, fig. 39)



8. Detail of a gold bowl from Hasanlu, mountain god with three dogs (photo: University Museum, University of Pennsylvania)



The allegorical and moralistic interpretation of mythology was championed by the Hellenistic Stoics, and Scylla is an example of their tortuous ingenuity. Scylla was an immoral monster, a beautiful whore who, with her doglike helpers, stripped the travelers of their money; but the insightful virtue (*phronesis*) of Odysseus resisted this temptation.<sup>21</sup>

If we now return to art, it is quite possible that a famous late Classical painting of Scylla by the painter Nicomachus of the Theban-Athenian school (active ca. 370–320 B.C.) influenced Hellenistic and Roman representations. The picture was displayed in Rome, at the Temple of Peace, and was available for sketchbooks and/or cartoons of Roman mosaicists, such as those who made the black-and-white mosaics of Tor Marancio (Fig. 3) and Ostia.<sup>22</sup> Nicomachus had labored for forty years (ca. 360–320 B.C.?) on a picture for Antipater (ca. 397–319 B.C.). He had made important innovations in painting; yet only one Scylla among hundreds of Pompeian paintings has been claimed as a copy of his work, and that figure was used for architectural decoration.<sup>23</sup>

The appearance of Scylla on coins of Acragas (Fig. 4) presupposes that Scylla and Charybdis were now definitely located in Sicily at the Straits of Messina, as they were by Thucydides. The proper rock and cave were placed at Scillace.<sup>24</sup>

In art Scylla first appears in the early Classical period, around 460 B.C., on gems, on coins of Cyme and Cyzicus, and on the well-known Melian reliefs.<sup>25</sup> A generation later a magnificent Scylla

appears on the tetradrachma of Acragas (Fig. 4) of ca. 410 B.C. She is a beautiful woman, the very embodiment of speed, hair streaming, dogs jumping, dorsal fins curving. Her human part is nude, and with her right hand she supports a large crab.<sup>26</sup>

The same gesture (with sides reversed), the same flying hair, reappear in the Scylla of Corvey (Figs. 1 and 2), who thus acquires a very ancient and noble ancestry.

From literary sources we learn that Androcydes of Cyzicus (ca. 420–370 B.C.), a contemporary of Zeuxis and Parrhasios, painted a Scylla with most delicate and lifelike fish around her. Androcydes was also commissioned by the Thebans to paint a very dynamic subject—the equestrian battle at Leuctra (371 B.C.).<sup>27</sup>

Scylla's exclamatory gesture, an expression of greeting or surprise, appears in two reflections of an obviously famous painting of Europa on the bull. In two South Italian vase paintings Scylla was shown as a geographic personification and a counterpart of Triton. On a beautifully drawn vase painted in Tarentum around 390–380 B.C.,<sup>28</sup> the painter had trouble adapting the design of a large panel painting to his vase (Fig. 5). We have only a fragment of this Scylla; a bit of Charybdis' rock and the wing of a Siren are seen above.

The entire scene is preserved and all participants are carefully labeled on a huge (three-foot-high) crater, now in the J. Paul Getty Museum. It was decorated by the ambitious Lucanian vase painter Asteas of Paestum (ca. 330 B.C.) (Fig. 6). Driven by Pothos (Desire), the Zeus Bull and Eu-

<sup>21</sup> Heraclitus (time of Augustus), *Incredibilia* 2, *Mythographi Graeci* III.2, ed. N. Festa (Leipzig, 1902), 73 f, no. II. On the Stoic allegorization of Homer see F. Wehrli, *Zur Geschichte der allegorischen Deutung Homers im Altertum* (Leipzig, 1928), chaps. 2–4.

<sup>22</sup> J. R. Clarke, *Figural Mosaics* (above, note 8).

<sup>23</sup> J. Overbeck, *Antiken Schriftquellen* (Leipzig, 1868), no. 1754 (four color painter), no. 1771. W. Helbig, *Wandgemälde Campaniens* (Leipzig, 1868), 213, no. 1063: "A woman with wild expression and snake-like hair swinging a rudder with both hands. From hips down her body turns into fins. Under them are three unclearly characterized monsters resembling dogs. Each has grabbed youths. The two youths at the corners raise their hands in despair." The attribution to Nicomachus was made by Schuradt, *Nikomachos* (Weimar, 1866), 40. Nicomachus' work might be reflected in a red-figure vase of "Rich Style" (School of Medias) showing Scylla bearing Thetis on her shoulder; D. Robinson, *Excavations at Olynthus, V. Mosaics, Vases, and Lamps of Olynthus*, The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Archaeology 18 (Baltimore, 1933), 109–15, no. 131, fig. 13, pls. 78, 79.

<sup>24</sup> E. Paribeni, in *Enciclopedia Italiana*, 31 (Rome, 1950), 160, photograph of Scillace.

<sup>25</sup> Coins: O. Waser in Roscher, IV, 1037, fig. 3; F. Imhoof-Blumer and O. Keller, *Tier und Pflanzenbilder auf Münzen und Gemmen des klassischen Altertums* (Leipzig, 1889; rpr. Hildesheim,

1972). Gems: J. Boardman, *Greek Gems and Fingerrings* (London, 1972), 194, 287, pl. 453. Reliefs: P. Jacobsthal, *Die melischen Reliefs* (Berlin, 1931), 200, fig. 77.

<sup>26</sup> Acragas (Agrigentum). The crab is the symbol of Acragas: Imhoof-Blumer and Keller, *Tier und Pflanzenbilder* (above, note 25), pl. 13:4, Roscher, IV, 1039, fig. 4; P. Franke and M. Hirmer, *Die griechische Münze* (Munich, 1964), fig. 60. As S. Hurter points out, the Scylla issue of Acragas is not by Poly(inos). Poly(inos) signed an Acragas issue with the quadriga and a crab in the exergue on the obverse and two eagles killing a hare on the reverse. Tuchelt's suggestion, "Skylia" (above, note 4), 180, that the Scylla tetradrachma bears the signature of Poly(inos) is erroneous.

<sup>27</sup> Pliny puts the *floruit* of Zeuxis and Parrhasios at 397 B.C. They were certainly both working at the time of the "Rich Style" (ca. 425–390 B.C.). For Androcydes see Overbeck, *Antiken Schriftquellen*, nos. 1649, 1731–33. For Scylla see Plutarch, *Sympos.* IV.2,3,8 and *Athenaeus* VIII.341.

<sup>28</sup> J. Paul Getty Museum, *Greek Vases, The Molly and Walter Bar-eiss Collection* (exhibition) (Malibu, 1983), 60–61, no. 44, attributed by A. D. Trendall to the "Black Fury Group." Scylla here holds a conch and a trident. The legs of the Zeus-Bull touch her hair. Above, on the left, the rock of Charybdis and a wing, perhaps that of a Siren.

ropa jet over a Scylla and a sea heavily populated with fish.<sup>29</sup>

Apparently that charming archaic storyteller, Stesichorus of Himera (Sicily), had already placed Scylla in Sicily. Just one fragment from his poem entitled *Scylla* is known; it says that Scylla was the daughter of Phorcys and Lamia. We do not know what else he told in this poem, but in his *Geryoneis* Scylla stole the oxen of Geryon from Heracles who killed her, but somehow she was revived by her father.<sup>30</sup>

There was apparently no established iconography for Scylla before the fifth century B.C. Early Classical works reflect a search for visual formulation. On coins of Cyme<sup>31</sup> Scylla has two dog heads growing out of her shoulders. On the openwork terra-cotta reliefs made on Melos she is decently dressed in a chiton with ballet skirt; the dogs come out of her middle. The coroplasts make her quiet, contemplative, very expressive of the transitional mood between austere early Classical and lofty "High Classical," Parthenonian visions of the divine.<sup>32</sup>

"A hateful bitch who licked her master's hand (Clytemnestra), with what monster shall I compare her, a two-headed vicious viper (*amphisbaina*), a Scylla dwelling in the rocks, the bane of mariners . . ." (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1228–34). This Aeschylean vision puts Scylla back among Homeric monsters and strongly emphasizes her canine character.

It is this dog-Scylla whose tracks lead back into the Bronze Age. As far as the Aegean is concerned, in 1906 F. Studniczka wrote a controversial article in which he identified Scylla on a clay sealing found by A. Evans at Cnossus (Fig. 7).<sup>33</sup> The seal shows a dog-headed monster rising from the sea to attack a boat with a running sailor on deck.

<sup>29</sup>M. Jentoft-Nilsen, "A Krater by Assteas," *Occasional Papers on Antiquities 1, Greek Vases in the J. Paul Getty Museum* 1 (1983), 139–48, figs. 1–8. I owe this reference and the knowledge of the vase to Marion True.

<sup>30</sup>The date of Stesichorus is controversial. The high chronology would place his work around mid-6th century B.C., the lower well into the 5th: C. M. Bowra, "Stesichorus," in *OCD*<sup>2</sup>, 1012–13; J. Vürtheim, *Stesichoros Fragmente und Biographie* (Leiden, 1919). All we know of his poem *Scylla* is that he made Scylla a daughter of Lamia; D. Page, ed., *Poetae Melici Graeci* (Oxford, 1962), 118, no. 220; *Schol. Apollonius Rhodius* IV.825–31 = *Geryoneis*, 99–101; 181–86.

<sup>31</sup>O. Waser in Roscher, IV, 1039, fig. 4.

<sup>32</sup>Jacobsthal, *Reliefs*, 71–74, pls. 34–36.

<sup>33</sup>F. Studniczka, "Skylia' in der mykenischen Kunst," *AM* 31 (1906), 50–52, fig. 1; Shepard, *Fish-Tailed Monster* (above, note 4), 27–29, fig. 39; A. Evans, *The Palace of Minos*, I (London, 1921), 118, fig. 87:7.

In unrevised Minoan chronology this monster would belong to the fifteenth century B.C. Studniczka's interpretation was refused, but not refuted, by the great student of Greek religion, M. P. Nilsson.<sup>34</sup> Because the ancient mythographers knew that Daedalus had fled from Minos to Sicily, some scholars have proposed that Minoan sailors' tales of the horrors of the Straits of Sicily were at the core of the Scylla story, growing more and more miraculous with the distance in time and space.<sup>35</sup> This would take Scylla back to 1600–1500 B.C.

There is something Hesiodean-Near Eastern about Scylla and her mixture of human-animal forms. Sure enough, in the *Great Eoiai*, attributed to the School of Hesiod, Scylla was one of the famous divine or heroic females celebrated by the poet(s). All we know of the poem is that Scylla was said to be a daughter of Hecate and Phorcys.<sup>36</sup> The mythographer Acusilaus of Argos (sixth century B.C.) echoed this connection of Scylla with the dreaded Hecate.<sup>37</sup>

A sinister divine power, Hecate is closely associated with dogs. Like many very ancient gods, she gives life and brings death to her hounds: she is *skylakotrophos* and *skylakopniktes*—she breeds them and she eats them.<sup>38</sup>

Right after my encounter with the Scylla of Corvey, it occurred to me that the dogs springing

<sup>34</sup>M. P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and Its Survival in Greek Religion*, 2nd ed. (Lund, 1950), 37, fig. 5. I. Pini states by letter that four imprint sealings (but not the actual seal) are preserved: Heraklion Museum, Mus. nos. 338, 339, 350, 352. Pini notes that the published drawings are not quite correct: the "monster" has teeth.

<sup>35</sup>Shepard, *Fish-Tailed Monster*, fig. 39; L. Casson, *The Ancient Mariners* (New York, 1964), 20–25, fig. 1d.

<sup>36</sup>Schol. Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* IV.828. The *Eoiai* were poems supposedly from the School of Hesiod which related the deeds of famous heroic or divine women. The reading "Phorbas" in the Scholion is surely an error; "Phorkys" is the correct reading.

<sup>37</sup>Acusilaus, in *FGrHist*, I, 57; I A, 385, commentary; II, Acusilaus F 42.

<sup>38</sup>C. H. Greenewalt, Jr., *Ritual Dinners in Early Historic Sardis*, University of California Publications in Classical Studies 17 (Berkeley, 1978), 42–45, treats numerous sacrificial deposits of puppies at Sardis; in considering Hecate a possible recipient of the sacrifices he has carefully collected the references and epithets of Hecate that involve her ambivalent relation to *skylax*, *skylakes*, such as *skylakotrophos* (puppy breeder), *skylagetis* (dog leader) as against *skylakopniktes* "dog (puppy) throttler." C. Kerényi, *The Greek Heroes*, III (London, 1974), 170, 315. C. Spretinak, *Lost Goddesses of Early Greece* (Boston, 1981), 27, 39: "Ghosts led by Hecate and her baying hounds of Hell . . . on moonless nights taught that without death there is no life." H. Rahner, *Griechische Mythen in christlicher Deutung* (Zurich, 1945), 300–304: "Hecate is surrounded by the barking dogs of Hades, she herself appears as a ghostly hound." He also cites the Christian poet Synesius (ca. A.D. 400) who speaks of Hecate's "soul-devouring dogs"; *Hymns* III.86–98.

from her loins might be an image of a bitch-goddess giving birth to *skylakes*. Such a development is palpable in archaic representations of the Gorgon, as U. Höckmann has shown.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, on an archaic shield device from Olympia Scylla and Gorgon are combined: a helmeted Gorgon in birth-giving posture has two leonine dogs jump out of her body to her right, while a sea monster's tail spirals off to her left. A pregnant sea pantheress has also been interpreted as Scylla.<sup>40</sup>

As the Greeks knew her, Scylla combines a canine and a marine element. The awe and terror before a pack of attack dogs might go all the way back to pastoral shepherd dogs or even to the barely tamed hunting dogs of Prehistoric societies. The maritime aspect reflects the vision of a society where seafaring and the sea with its monsters were important. Unfortunately etymology yields nothing conclusive; *scylla*, *scylax*, *skyllein* ("to rend," "to strip") qualify as Indo-European; whether the chicken or the egg came first—*scylax* or *skyllein*—is an unresolved question.<sup>41</sup>

O. Waser already looked to the Phoenicians, and K. Shepard has devoted the first chapter of her book *Fish-Tailed Monsters* to Near Eastern examples. She had proposed the Syrian goddess Derketo, known from Lucian, as a possible precursor of Scylla.<sup>42</sup> The master of all things Hittite, H. G. Güterbock, recalls no suitable texts or representations of the birth scene or of a dog-goddess—an important matter, as the Hydra and the Chimaera have forerunners in late Hittite glyptic and relief sculpture as well as (for the Hydra) in Hittite mythology.<sup>43</sup> Güterbock points out, however, that there existed a Near Eastern goddess who anticipates the destructive aspect of Scylla. In a Luvian

inscription ("Hittite Hieroglyphic") of King Araras of Carchemish and his son Karamanas carved on a monument set up in the late eighth century B.C., the usual imprecation against the violator of the monument ends with: "The dogs of Nin-ka-ra-wa-s shall devour his head" and in another inscription from Bulgar Maden the goddess herself is supposed to eat the culprit.<sup>44</sup> In an illuminating note I. J. Gelb has traced Nikarak through Akkadian and Sumerian, and thus to the third millennium B.C.<sup>45</sup>

A fertility goddess associated with dogs was a member of the Mesopotamian pantheon. As J. Bloom pointed out to me, a bitch with four suckling puppies is represented on an Old Babylonian (1800–1600 B.C.) terra-cotta plaque from Ishchali. Most plaques of this kind are found in temples or in houses, perhaps as part of domestic cults. J. Oates tentatively suggests as recipient the great healing goddess Gula, for whose association with dogs abundant evidence has been found.<sup>46</sup> Gula's original function in Sumerian mythology was that of a fertility goddess as a daughter of the sky god. On an Old Babylonian boundary stone guaranteed by Gula the dog appears as her attribute; and a sculpture of a dog (Middle Assyrian) bears a dedication to Gula.<sup>47</sup> She does not, however, display that attack-dog fury that distinguishes Scylla and Nikarak.

The only real iconographic prototype for Scylla in Near Eastern art appears on the tenth-century B.C. gold bowl from Hasanlu (Azerbaijan) (Fig. 8).

<sup>39</sup>U. Höckmann, "Zur Ikonographie der Gorgo," *Schriften des deutschen Archäologenverbandes* 5 (Mannheim, 1981), 111–66.

<sup>40</sup>E. T. Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* (Berkeley, 1979), 187, fig. 8 (pregnant Scylla), fig. 19 (Gorgo-Scylla).

<sup>41</sup>P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique* V:1 (Paris, 1977), 1022–23, to which G. Nagyi referred me; E. Bossacq, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris, 1916), 879–80; for older views, see Roscher, IV, 1071. I leave aside the complicated matter of *skylax* and the dog offerings known in Caria; see Greenewalt, Jr., *Ritual Dinners*.

<sup>42</sup>Shepard, *Fish-Tailed Monster*, 7.

<sup>43</sup>The comparison of the Hittite myth of the dragon Illuyanka, slain by the weather god with the aid of a human or of the god's son, and Heracles, son of Zeus, slaying the hydra is particularly instructive for the transformation and adaptation wrought by the Greeks in the oral-literary visual and mythical tradition they had received from the Near East. E. Akurgal, *Die Kunst der Hethiter* (Munich, 1951), 52–53, fig. 104, Malatya, 1050–850 B.C.; 94, fig. 110, Carchemish, 1050–850 B.C. ("Chimaera").

<sup>44</sup>H. Güterbock by letter, July 1984; Akurgal, *Kunst der Hethiter*, 93, fig. 121, Araras.

<sup>45</sup>I. G. Gelb, "The Dogs of Nikarawas," *AJSLL*, 55:2 (1938), 200–203.

<sup>46</sup>J. Oates, *Babylon* (London, 1979), 73, fig. 49 with caption. According to the Museum Office of the Oriental Institute, Chicago, the Museum possesses two plaques from the same mold, A 9355 and A 9334 (reproduced here and originally published in H. Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient* [Baltimore, 1955], 57, pl. 59A). The two plaques were purchased in 1930 from a dealer in Baghdad but identified by Frankfort as coming from the site of Ishchali. Official dating is Isin-Larsa period, 2025–1763 B.C.

For Gula see D. O. Edzard, "Mesopotamien, Heilgöttinnen," in *Wörterbuch der Mythologie*, ed. H. W. Haussig (Stuttgart, 1965), 76 and I. Fuhr, "Der Hund als Begleitier der Göttin Gula," *AbhMünch, Philos.-hist.Kl., N.F.* 79 (1977), 135–45. Fuhr presents an excellent survey of the association of dogs (and snakes) with healing divinities in the Near East and Greece. She cites modern medical thought to the effect that, attracted by the smell of festering wounds, dogs lick the wounds and their spittle contains leukocytes that contribute to the healing process.

<sup>47</sup>J. Krecher, "Göttersymbole," in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und der vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, III, ed. E. Ebeling, B. Meissner, E. Weidner, and W. von Soden (Berlin, 1957–71), 487.

Here a bearded god shows three dog's heads growing out of his back. He is surrounded by water (the sea), another trait relating him to the marine Scylla.<sup>48</sup>

It has been a long way to go, from the lovely hills

and vales of the Weser to the steaming delta of the Tigris and Euphrates and the mountains of Iran, and from the Carolingian emperors to the Sumerian kings. Now I had better stop disgorging *poly-mathie* like a scholarly Charybdis lest an editorial Scylla snip me down to size.

<sup>48</sup>E. Porada, *The Art of Ancient Iran* (New York, 1965), 99–100, figs. 63 and 64. V. Haas, *Hethitische Berggötter und hurritische Steindämonen*, *Kulturgeschichte der antiken Welt* 10 (Mainz, 1982), 199–202, fig. 40, sees the three heads as a separate entity.

*Ave, Erneste, et vale.*

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